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Mr. ALLEN's

ORDINATION SERMON.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. BENJAMIN THURSTON, A. M.

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE

CHURCH AT NORTH-HAMPTON.

NOVEMBER 2, 1785.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

AN ORDINATION SERMON.

I. Timothy, IV. Part of the 6th Verse.

And thou shalt be a good Minister of Jesus Christ.

THE office of a minister is serious, interesting and important. The duties of the office require diligence, assiduity and labour---- And none may undertake it but such as are called of God, are solemnly introduced by prayer and the laying on of hands, and are willing to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

With such men the church has been furnished from the beginning. And there has never failed a succession of those whose labours have been devoted to the sanctuary, and to minister in holy things.

Under the Jewish dispensation the priesthood was purely levitical and the office propitiatory. Under the Christian that order is broken; a new institution established; and the commission only ministerial.

The twelve Apostles, after Christ, were the first who were appointed to the ministry. They were authorised to appoint others, and these also their successors. " The same commit thou to faithful men," saith

ſaith St. Paul, in his charge to Timothy, "who ſhall be able to teach others alſo." This was equally applicable to the Apoſtles in general. And in compliance with their directions, they proceeded in ordaining men to the work of the miniſtry by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the preſbytery. And from their example the ſame method has ever been practiſed in ordination. And nothing can be more ſerious and ſolemn, than the ſeparation of a man, in this formal manner, to ſuch an important employment. And yet we are happy to do it, from a conſideration that the glory of God is thereby promoted, and that it is an inſtitution very ſerviceable to the churches. The churches univerſally ſtand in need of watchmen thus placed upon their walls. Each of the ſeven churches of Aſia* had its angel or miniſter, to whom St. John directed his epiſtles. And it is equally requiſite for others as it was for them.

The choice of a man to the work of the miniſtry depends, not on them who are to ordain him; but on the church and people of whom "the Holy Ghoſt" thus "makes him an overſeer." Every ſociety of chriſtians have a right to chooſe for themſelves. But they ought to improve this priviledge wiſely, act with deliberation, and elect ſuch only as are able to inſtruct them in the ſublime truths of the goſpel. It equally becomes

* Revelation, 2d chap. 1ſt verſe, &c.

comes thoſe alſo who ſeparate a man to the paſtoral office, to proceed with caution. They ſhould be well ſatisfied reſpecting his character and qualifications, and ſee that they "lay hands ſuddenly on no man." They ſhould introduce none into the miniſtry, but ſuch as are likely to prove "good miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt."

From a deep ſenſe of theſe intereſting truths, I have choſen the words before us, for our preſent conſideration. They ſtand in the midſt of a verſe, and are introduced thus: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of theſe things, thou ſhalt be a good miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt." The things here referred to are ſome of thoſe exerciſes which belong to a goſpel-miniſter. We ſhall not depart therefore from the original deſign of the words, to make uſe of them upon the preſent occaſion. And in the uſe of them, we ſhall proceed to deſcribe the character, qualifications and employment of a goſpel-miniſter.

I. We are to deſcribe the character of a goſpel-miniſter.

We ſhall not have time to enter minutely into his character, and view it in all its parts; and ſhall therefore only touch upon ſome of the out-lines, and ſuch as are moſt eſſential. And it may not be amiſs to aſſert that the leading part of his character is that of a chriſtian. He is a chriſtian in the humble attire of a ſervant---A ſervant bearing the croſs of his maſter, whoſe name he wears. Christ's

CHRIST's miniſters are not known by any high and elevated titles. The ſtile of prelate, arch-biſhop, prebendary or dean, as uſed in the eſtabliſhed churches, does not belong to them. The higheſt title we find in the goſpel is that of a biſhop, or miniſter of Chriſt. And to be worthy of this is the greateſt honour on earth. And it is an honour, after which every one who wears the livery ought to aim. And in compliance with the duties of his office he will obtain it, and prove himſelf a faithful ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt.

NEXT to that of a chriſtian, the two principal parts of a miniſterial character, are piety and virtue. They indeed are included in, and eſſential to it. The one expreſſes our temper and behaviour towards God, the other towards our fellow men. And love to each ſhould give the animating ſpring to all our actions, eſpecially thoſe of a goſpel-miniſter. His ſituation calls him to more vigorous and active ſervices in Chriſt's vineyard than others. The charge of many is committed to him. And without ſuch a noble, inſpiring principle, he will moſt aſſuredly fail in his duty. But while his heart is warmly engaged with love to God, and kindles into the ſame ardour with regard to men, it will give energy to his whole frame, and lead him on to a faithful and vigorous diſcharge of his duties. He will therefore ever ſtrive to maintain a ſpirit of piety, and an ardent zeal for the divine glory. He will alſo cultivate a friendly and benevolent temper to all mankind. And

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a miniſter who is unmindful of theſe is like clouds without rain; or in the apoſtolic ſtile, "As ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal." Not that I ſuppoſe it impoſſible for him to be ſerviceable in his ſtation. A doctrinal acquaintance with the ſcriptures may, in ſome reſpects, render him a profitable inſtructor---He may in the hand of Providence be an inſtrument of promoting men's ſalvation---He may even feed Chriſt's ſheep and lambs, as the ravens fed Elijah. But unleſs he is inſpired with this heavenly temper, although he hath preached the goſpel to others, he himſelf will finally be a "caſt-away."

SUCH conſiderations preſs with great weight upon the mind of every good miniſter. He is therefore exceeding attentive to himſelf; diſcovers a godly jealouſy of his own heart; keeps under his body and brings it, as much as poſſible, into ſubjection. He can never be eaſy unleſs he is ſatisfied the moſt devout love to God and men is the life and ſpirit of all his behaviour. And being thus animated, the glory of God, the honour of religion, the worth of ſouls, and the importance of the charge committed to him, will awaken the moſt tender ſenſations. They will call forth the energy of the whole ſoul, inſpire the greateſt fidelity to God, and lead him to the utmoſt exertions for his glory, and the good of mankind. Theſe are motives which far exceed any lucrative or worldly views. And every miniſter muſt be in ſome meaſure actuated by them, or he had much bet-

tor never have undertaken the sacred employment. They may indeed sometimes appear a mask for enthusiasm, and so may any other exercises of religion. But we will not relinquish religion for this reason, nor exclude such motives from a ministerial character. They are an essential part of it. And if they even raise us to a degree of enthusiasm, we will not reject them. A holy fire that thus flames too high will readily abate, will fall to the bounds of reason and the word of truth. And within these, and regulated by them, our zeal and animation cannot be too great. We are bound to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. And our exertions will ever be equal to the principles and motives that govern our hearts. What a powerful incentive then has a minister under these influences to do his duty! He can go on with a ready heart and willing mind. He can "run and not be weary, walk and not faint." All his actions will be regulated by the oracles of God. His life squared by the divine precepts. The example of the blessed Saviour is transcribed in his manners, and he himself exhibits an example of the power of divine truth upon his heart. His whole deportment proves his attachment to the interest of his Lord and Master. And he thus "lets his light so shine before men, that they, seeing his good works, may glorify his father which is in heaven." Again,

II. We are to consider the qualifications of a gospel-

minister.

minister. And here it may not be amiss to observe, that in order to become extensively useful to the churches, a minister must be a man capable of improvement in knowledge.

There is, perhaps, as much difference in the natural capacities of men as in their complexion. Some can penetrate much deeper into the nature of things than others. And they are more capable, by far, of investigating truths in general.

I do not say but that a man of moderate capacity may be equally useful in many employments with the greatest. It is doubtless true. And in the improvement of his talents, he may even be a good minister. But it looks rational to suppose that with the same disposition to improve his talents and do good, the greater abilities a man has, the more likely he will be, as a public teacher, to serve mankind.

It is not so easy an employment to preach the gospel as to reduce it to the capacity of a novice; or to one whose mental powers have not been improved by science. The brightest natural genius, unless inured to study, will not form an able teacher. The mental faculties of such appear like gold in the mine, rather than that which is separated from the dross, and refined. And it is as necessary that the mind should be enlarged, as that the precious metal should be extracted from the ore. And without it, one will be as useless as the other.

I would not be underſtood, however, that what is called a liberal education, is abſolutely neceſſary for a preacher of the goſpel. But the greater his advantages the better. There is a general affinity between all kinds of intellectual improvement. Every branch of ſcience has a tendency to expand the mind, and give freedom to the exerciſe of our thoughts. Thus when the mind opens upon one ſubject, it will eaſier comprehend another. And many things which lie hid from common view, gradually come to light, and appear eaſy and familiar. But there are certain branches of ſcience which tend more immediately to accompliſh a preacher than others, and with which his mind ought to be well furniſhed.

Such Particularly, is a general acquaintance with the ancient languages, eſpecially thoſe in which the ſacred ſcriptures were originally written. Although they are well tranſlated in the main; yet there are many paſſages capable of a different conſtruction, and, perhaps, ſome that may be corrected, or at leaſt variouſly explained. It muſt therefore give a miniſter a great advantage to be able to look into his bible and read it in the original. He may then determine for himſelf the propriety or impropriety of the tranſlation, and explain every paſſage according to his beſt judgment.

It is also another important qualification for a miniſter of the goſpel to underſtand the hiſtory of nations, ancient

cient and modern, eſpecially the former, and ſuch as were written near the time of the ſacred ſcriptures. He thereby may become acquainted, in ſome meaſure, with the manners and cuſtoms of the people, to whom they were directed, and be able to explain many paſſages, which otherwiſe would be intricate. And if it were poſſible to be obtained, it might be wiſhed, that the world was better furniſhed with the hiſtory of thoſe early periods than it is. The loſs of the * Alexandrian library we regret at the preſent day. The only way to repair it is to make the beſt improvement of what we have. A neglect of this is the occaſion of many errors. Many texts of ſcripture are thereby involved in clouds, and a myſtical meaning is invented for ſuch others as are plain and eaſy. A miniſter who is well acquainted with this uſeful ſtudy is, at leaſt in part, releaſed from thoſe errors. Obſerving the miſtakes, as well as excellencies of preceding ages, he can ſeparate the chaff from the wheat; and while the wind takes the chaff, ſecure the wheat in his "garner." His memory will thus be furniſhed with a fund of knowledge to deal out in converſation, and in his ſermons as occaſion

* This library conſiſted of 700,000 valuable books, collected by Ptolemy Soter, King of Egypt, and his ſucceſſors, who ſent into all nations, where the knowledge of letters had ſpread, to procure copies and tranſcribe them. And when 400,000 volumes of them were accidentally burnt at the time of Cæſar's wars with the people of Alexandria, they were again replaced with others, and remained 'till the ſeventh century, and near a thouſand years from the firſt foundation: but were then entirely conſumed by the particular direction of Omar, Emperor of the Saracenes, when they over-run the kingdom. And thus the greateſt and moſt valuable fund of knowledge in antiquity, at once fell a ſacrifice to the caprice of a Mahometan Khalif.

ſion requires. It will alſo be of conſequence to improve his own underſtanding and to regulate his conduct in life.

But of all writings calculated to improve a miniſter's mind, or guide his ways, the ſacred bible is the beſt, and requires his firſt and principal attention. It is the magazine from whence he is to derive all his inſtructions. Every other ſcience ſerves but a little purpoſe further than to aſſiſt him in digging the treaſures from theſe golden mines. And it is the duty of a miniſter to look into all parts of them, that he may be able to "bring forth from theſe treaſures, things new and old." He ſhould "ſearch the ſcriptures daily. Theſe are they," ſays our Saviour, "that teſtify of me."

It was mentioned much in favour of Timothy as a miniſter, that "from a child he knew the holy ſcriptures." And all who commence preachers of the goſpel ſhould become early acquainted with them. They ſhould be like Apollos, "mighty in the ſcriptures." And a miniſter unacquainted with thoſe ſacred writings is like a warrior, who knows not the uſe of his ſword; or a ſeaman, ignorant of his compaſs. The former would make as good a ſtand againſt an enemy, as he againſt the adverſaries of religion: and the latter as ſkilful a pilot at ſea, as he in directing men to ſalvation.

From the oracles of God only, is a miniſter able to teach men the way of happineſs. And he ſhould have an experimental acquaintance with thoſe truths he inculcates

culates upon others. And unleſs they have full influence upon his heart, and the words appear in his life, he is not ſufficiently acquainted with them. And he will not be likely to open them with preciſion and clearneſs, nor impreſs them with fidelity upon the minds of his hearers. It is of the utmoſt conſequence, therefore, that a miniſter ſhould well underſtand the ſcriptures.

NEXT to the ſacred oracles, an acquaintance with human nature is neceſſary for a goſpel preacher. "The knowledge of mankind, is man." It is a great advantage to every one. And to none more than a public inſtructor. But it is a branch of improvement even they themſelves often too much neglect.---My brethren and fathers will pardon me this ſuggeſtion, when they conſider it as a matter of grief to many. But more eſpecially when I impute it to being ſo much immerſed in ſtudy, as many are, and their ſeclusion from the world. We are thus inſenſibly led to overlook human nature, to amuſe ourſelves with ſubjects beyond our own and others capacities, and to preach abſtruſe and metaphyſical diſquiſitions inſtead of goſpel ſermons. This is an error, however, for which a youth has an apology, to which the aged can lay but little claim; but ſhould be carefully avoided by all.---A miniſter who underſtands mankind, knows his diſcourſes, muſt be adapted to their capacities, and his life, as far as is conſiſtent with religion, to their prejudices. And he will be able ſkilfully

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to take the advantage of their paſſions and inclinations, and regulate them by the word of truth. And if he acts as a teacher, he will do it with preciſion and enforce his inſtructions with energy and pathos.---His intreaties with ſinners alſo will be fervent and commanding---His conſolations to the diſtreſſed, ſympathetic and ſoothing-----His reproofs like thoſe of Nathan to * David, will carry conviction with them---And in a word, from an acquaintance with the ſcriptures and mankind, he will be able " rightly to divide the word of truth and give to every one his portion in due ſeaſon."

Such is the temper of mankind however, that a great degree of prudence is neceſſary for a goſpel preacher. No ſtation in life requires a greater. He ſtands as a city upon a hill, and the eyes of the world are upon him. And he has not only to ſtarve their cenſures by his prudence; but to feed their ſouls with the goſpel food. He muſt, therefore, be not only wiſe as a ſerpent; but harmleſs as a dove. Thus, by his inoffenſive and prudent behaviour, he muſt approve himſelf to the conſciences of men. And without this he will render his miniſtry in a great meaſure uſeleſs. Few of mankind have a cloak of charity to cover their imperfections, and many are diſpoſed to magnify even a foible. Every thing therefore that has the appearance of either ſhould be avoided. And if poſſible, he ſhould lead men, from an

* 2d Sam. 12. 13.

an eſteem of the uprightneſs that appears in him, to admire and obey that truth which he ſo often declares to them. And unleſs this is in ſome meaſure the caſe, many offices of kindneſs, endeavours to compoſe differences, reproofs, admonitions, and even good diſcourſes, may be almoſt or wholly loſt.

Much depends alſo upon a miniſter's timing his inſtructions, and every other duty, according to the tempers and circumſtances of his people. An imprudent ſtep here may prevent the moſt ſtrenuous exertions afterwards to do them good. But a word "fitly" and ſeaſonably "ſpoken," according to the agreeable alluſion of the wiſe man, "is like apples of gold in pictures of ſilver."

The laſt qualification that I ſhall mention requiſite for a miniſter, is a degree of firmneſs and fortitude. We cannot exclude this from the qualifications of a man whoſe labours are ſo exceeding arduous. He, like other men, has a law in his members to retard him---the vicious inclinations of men to oppoſe him---and all the powers of darkneſs to exert their force againſt him. And even under all theſe embarraſſments, it will not do for him to prove reluctant, to give way to temptations, or appear in the leaſt diſheartened. He muſt go forward under the moſt declining ſtate of religion,--muſt endure hardneſs as a good ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt, and fight reſolutely his ſpiritual warfare. Nothing there-

fore ſhould unhinge him from his ſtability and firmneſs. He muſt let neither honour nor diſhonour, good nor evil report, or any thing whatever, deſtroy the balance of his reaſon, or obſtruct him in the diſcharge of his duty. Nor is he permitted to flinch through fear or favour, from the purſuit of his great undertaking. He muſt be faithful to God, to himſelf, and to the people of his charge, and thus "clear himſelf from the blood of all men." We proceed now,

III. To conſider the employment of a goſpel-miniſter. And it is doubtleſs his principal employment to preach the goſpel. The faithful diſcharge of this duty will require his attention both in private and in public.

It is almoſt needleſs, after what has been ſaid, to mention that cloſe application to ſtudy is neceſſary for a goſpel-preacher. We are ſenſible that much of his time will be thus employed---that he will here furniſh his mind with ſuch thoughts as appear moſt profitable to his hearers----that he will "chooſe out acceptable words," and range them in a manner beſt calculated for their edification. And herein a miniſter may have an opportunity fully to prove his attention to his ſtudies, and his abilities as a preacher. His diſcourſes will carry the evident marks of both, in the propriety of ſentiment and familiarity of ſtyle; each will be entirely adapted to the underſtanding of his people; and his ſermons will be compoſed in the beſt manner to profit them.

them. A buſineſs which requires the moſt ſkilful hand: A hand that can paint truth in all its native charms, and yet reduce it to the capacities of all---that can improve the mind and warm the heart at the ſame time. A work far too great for a human being! But it is a work which every goſpel miniſter will attempt to perform. And in the trial he will let his thoughts be ſuch as are profitable and uſeful---his language will be ſimple, ſtrong and nervous---his illuſtrations rational, pertinent and eaſy---and the whole tenor of his diſcourſes will ariſe from, and be founded upon, the ſcriptures. And he will ever find it beſt, as much as poſſible, to adopt the ſtyle of thoſe ſacred writings. It is evidently attended with the ſimple and yet ſublime air he deſires. He perceives in it a noble and maſculine energy inimitable. And he will copy after it as much as poſſible in the whole of his preaching. And thoſe who neglect to do this often "darken council with words without knowledge." Inſtead of inſtructing they "perplex and puzzle the hearers."

St. Paul, a maſter of rhetoric, and a man capable of all the arts of addreſs, gives us an excellent pattern for all preachers, in relating his own conduct. "And I, brethren, ſays he,* when I came unto you, came not in excellency of ſpeech, or of wiſdom. I had rather ſpeak five words with my underſtanding,§ that by my voice

* 1ſt Cor. 2. 1. § 1ſt Cor. 14. 19.

voice I might teach others alſo, than ten thouſand words in an unknown tongue." And every preacher ought to adopt the ſame ſentiment and practice, and let his language always be ſuch as can eaſily be underſtood. This is a work indeed which requires care, and it ſometimes mortifies the ambition of a preacher; but it is a ſacrifice his duty calls him to make. His greateſt ambition ſhould be to be uſeful to mankind, and to do good. Such will be the deſire of every good miniſter, and he will govern his conduct by it; will preach the truth in the moſt engaging and intelligible manner, and according to the oracles of God.

MINISTERS are not to preach themſelves, or any imaginations of their own, but the goſpel of Chriſt. And no ſentiment, however pleaſing it may be, ſhould be adopted till brought to this ſtandard, and found conſiſtent with it. In this way a preacher will be likely to maintain a connection in his diſcourſes, and have one part agree with the other. And in ſhort, if the practice were univerſally adopted, we ſhould ſee a better agreement in ſentiment, and more harmony among the miniſters of the goſpel, as well as private chriſtians, than has ever yet been known in the world.

THE goſpel is like an inſtrument of various ſtrings, conſtructed for one tune only; and, that tune has various parts; either of which may move alone or in concert. The ſkilful muſician therefore can take one part,

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or the whole, and never injure the inſtrument. He knows the tone of every ſtring, its exact ſtrength, and can give it its proper ſound. And when he moves all parts together, the harmony will be compleat. But the unſkilful hand will ſtrain one ſtring too tight, let another lie looſe, drive one part before another, or take one alone and raiſe that ſo high as to ſnap the cord, and thus the uſe of the inſtrument is injured. Juſt ſo many treat the ſacred oracles. They exalt one divine perfection above another, and raiſe one moral duty ſo high, that others of equal importance are unnoticed. Thus ſome have ſuch an opinion of the mercy of God, that they overlook his juſtice. Others elevate his juſtice ſo high, that they neglect his mercy: ſome eſtabliſh faith upon the ruin of all moral virtue; and the name of faith grates in the ears of others like a diſcord. And in this manner men deſtroy the agreement, and in many reſpects the uſefulneſs of the ſcriptures. Some place all religion in one duty, and ſome in another. They overlook the general harmony of the ſeveral parts, and how the whole compleats the ſyſtem. Such are the defects that have occaſioned a conſiderable proportion of the diſputes about doctrines that have been in the world. An impartial attention to the ſcriptures therefore, will releaſe us in ſome meaſure from theſe contentions. We ſhall then be cautious of every extreme, and always endeavour to maintain the harmony of the whole.

But it is eaſier to point out the errors of men, than to correct them. And to eſtabliſh any articles of faith, will be thought by ſome, to betray what we have already expoſed in others; we ſhall therefore only fix upon ſome particular points, from which a good miniſter will ſeldom depart.

A good miniſter will ever be careful to impreſs upon the minds of his hearers a reverential awe of the divine majeſty, and a juſt ſenſe of his nature and perfections. He will alſo ſhow the union of the ſon of God with the Father, his offices as a mediator, what he has done and ſuffered for us, and the extent of that atonement he has made for ſin. And he will not neglect the elapſed ſtate of man, how ſin has defiled our natures, the neceſſity of a renovation, pardon and ſanctification. He will likewiſe delineate the duty of man, and ſhow the neceſſity of faith and goſpel obedience. And he will enforce theſe duties from the motives of happineſs and miſery, both in this life and the future.

When a miniſter traces theſe and other truths, and moral duties connected with them from the fountain to the ſeveral branches, an extenſive field will open for employment, that will require much time and labour. He will find it not an eaſy matter to declare the whole council of God; to take the beſt ſteps to reclaim the ſinner; to build him up in the truth of the goſpel, and to perform every part of his duty to him, and others, with

with fidelity to God and their immortal ſouls. But theſe muſt be his ſtrongeſt endeavours, or his condemnation will be dreadful; while he has "preached the goſpel to others" he himſelf will "be a caſt-away."

It is the duty of a miniſter to preach, not only in word and doctrine, but alſo by example. Examples often have a greater effect upon the minds of men than precepts or moral perſuaſions. Truth may command the judgment and ſway the reaſon, but examples often reach the heart and engage the affections. An ardent zeal, by the force of ſympathy, ſeldom fails to take fire in others. And intimate companions frequently imbibe nearly the ſame temper and diſpoſition. And it is ſometimes the caſe, that a people are inſpired with a diſpoſition reſembling that of their miniſter. When this ardent zeal is evident, it is charming, and is often attended with the moſt happy conſequences. But whether the doctrine or example of a good miniſter has any effect upon the minds of others or not, they cannot fail to be pleaſing to God, who will be the final judge of his fidelity. And he who maintains a ſacred regard to him, and diſcharges his duty faithfully, ſhall not fail of his approbation. And his reward ſhall be, not according to the ſucceſs of his exertions, but according to his fidelity in the ſacred employment.

We may yet further follow the good miniſter from the pulpit to ſome of his more private duties; and here,

here, we ſhall find him as attentive to the welfare of his people, as in the ſtudy or deſk. He will improve every opportunity to adviſe, inſtruct and edify them. Nor will he omit the Apoſtle's direction to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine." And wherever his duty calls him, we ſhall find him ready to go, and he never will be "ſlothful in buſineſs," but "fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord." And ſuch alſo will be his intereſt in the concerns of others, that he will both "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Nothing eſpecially will prevent the ſympathetic tears from flowing and mingling grief with thoſe who are under ſorrow and affliction. What tender ſenſations does he often feel for them! from the ſofteſt emotions of his heart, he will endeavour to pour the oil of conſolation into the boſom of the diſtreſſed, comfort the ſorrowful, ſuccour the tempted and ſupport the ſinking ſpirits of all that are oppreſſed. And he will not deſert them in the moſt critical hour; the hour when nature is ſinking under the weight of diſeaſes, and life itſelf is departing from them. He will fly to them, and if poſſible, ſooth the pangs of death with the hopes of future glory, and the aſſurance that theſe momentary pains will be ſucceeded by a "crown that fadeth not away." But, alas! it is out of his power often to adminiſter this conſolation. The character, temper, conſcience, and ſometimes, even words of men f id it. And O, how muſt one who has the charge

of

of their immortal ſouls feel for them! Many ſuch overwhelming ſcenes, our fathers in the miniſtry have, perhaps, always experienced. Tell us then, your ſons, what can be done on this critical occaſion. Can you with ſoft words aſſuage their grief and ſooth their minds to reſt? The oracles of God and your own conſciences deny you the agreeable office. You can only follow the example of your divine maſter, and command them to repent and believe the goſpel, and let your interceſſions aſſail the throne of grace for them. This then is the duty of all in the ſacred office. And they will continue their exhortations and prayers, 'till the lamp of life goes out, and there their duty ends.

THERE are yet others whoſe ſituation is yet more awful; and with whom the work of the miniſtry is yet more affecting and difficult. I mean ſuch as have "no bands in their death," whoſe conſciences are aſleep, and ears deaf to all inſtructions. If we tell ſuch their danger, it appears inhumane; to neglect it is unfriendly; and, perhaps, a neglect of duty. And the Lord here, as in all other caſes, only can enable us to do right. We muſt implore ſtrength from above to do our duty; let our ſouls mourn in ſecret places for them; commit them into the hands of their Creator; and intreat that he would have mercy on them, prepare them for, and receive them to glory.

PRAYER is a moſt eſſential part of a miniſter's duty. And it is a priviledge, that beyond his own heart, there are no obſtacles to prevent it. They may have free

access to the throne of grace at all times for themselves and others. And a sense of duty will often call them there. They are ordained to stand between God and his people, like Aaron with his censer, and endeavour to prevent their destruction by the plague of sin. And while "they weep between the porch and the altar," they will cry, "spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." Every good minister is sensible that without the divine aid to attend him he "can do nothing," and will prove an "unprofitable servant." While he therefore endeavours to do his duty, he will repose his whole hope of success upon the influences of the holy spirit. And his eyes will be directed to God through the Redeemer, that he may be enabled to go on in the way of his duty; that his labours may be sanctified, and that he may be "pure from the blood of all men." He will not cease to pray, that he may be found among the faithful, that God would own him and his imperfect services, and that the work of the Lord may prosper in his hands. His hearty desire and prayer will be, that not one committed to his charge should perish, nor indeed of all mankind, but that "all Israel may be saved."

HAVING given some sketches of the character, qualifications and employment of a gospel-minister, permit me now in the first place,

MY *Reverend* FATHERS *and* BRETHREN,

IN the work of the ministry, to urge it as a duty, that we act up to, and if possible exceed this description.

THERE is nothing more important than that the

miniſterial office ſhould be kept ſacred; and that thoſe who are in it, behave agreeable to their profeſſion. It is indeed the greateſt work ever attempted by men; and we may all ſay with the Apoſtle,* "who is ſufficient for theſe things?" And had we not the promiſe of aid from above, our hearts would often fail us. But, under the divine aſſiſtance, we can go forward. Let us then not faint in our minds; but continue "ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Much depends, we are ſenſible, upon our fidelity in our maſter's intereſt. The glory of the Redeemer, the honour of religion, and the ſalvation of many are connected with it. Whatever obſtacles we meet with, they ſhould never retard us in our duty, or prevent our fidelity in our great undertaking. But let us prove ourſelves "good miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt." Thus ſhall we be faithful to God, to ourſelves, and to the people of our reſpective charges; ſhall all unite in the common cauſe of chriſtianity. Direct our united efforts to oppoſe wickedneſs, infidelity, and all eſſential errors, and endeavour to lead all men in the way of happineſs. And in the diſcharge of our duty, we are ſure that we ſhall not fail of a glorious reward. "Be thou faithful unto death, ſaith the Lord,† and I will give thee a crown of life."

While we wiſh for the general proſperity of Zion, and are engaged in building up her walls; it muſt give us pleaſure to find men qualified to aſſiſt us, and diſpoſed to undertake the arduous buſineſs. Such is the

* 2d. Cor. 2. 16. † Revel. 2d. 10.

happineſs we at preſent experience upon this joyful, but exceeding ſolemn occaſion. We are here called to ſeperate a man to the work of the miniſtry, with whom we have been well acquainted; whoſe abilities, integrity and uprightneſs ſtand unimpeachable by any; and whoſe character is approved in the neighb'ring churches.

We rejoice, *my dear Brother*, that we are called to commit the treaſure of the goſpel into your hands. "The great Head of the church, we truſt, has raiſed you up, and qualified you for this very purpoſe."

I doubt not, you have long ſince conſidered the greatneſs of the work in which you now engage; and that it has ever been agreeable to you. An acquaintance early in life at the *Univerſity*, § leads me to make the aſſertion; by an intimacy ſince, I am confirmed in it; and the late change in your employment * fixes it beyond diſpute. "And we rejoice that you are called to labour in a part of our Lord's vineyard, that is agreeable to you; and where you may ſerve your maſter and the churches with delight." But you are to remember, my brother, that you are not called here for indolence and repoſe, but to labour; and that you are to be faithful as a ſteward of God. You are now to watch for the ſouls of men, as one "that muſt give an account."

I shall not attempt to mark out the ſeveral parts o

§ Mr. Thurston and the author were of the ſame claſs at the *Univerſity* in Cambridge.

* Mr. Thurſton commenced preacher as ſoon after he left the Univerſit as uſual, and continued ſome time in the employment; but thro' want health was obliged to leave it, and ſeveral years followed the mercanti buſineſs at Exeter.' But preaching being his favorite buſineſs (having r ceived his health, and a door being open at North-Hampton) he again r turned to the ſacred employment.

your duty before you; this is already done by Chriſt himſelf. You are to follow him as your pattern, make his precepts your guide, and preach his goſpel. You will therefore conſult the holy ſcripture, as your only guide, in the path of duty; preach ſuch ſentiments only as are agreeable to, or are derived therefrom. And in the choice of theſe, you will follow your own judgment, in preference to any other. But in all your enquiries after truth, you will keep in mind that ſilken cord which binds the ſeveral parts; touch it with a trembling hand, and never injure the connection between them. And do not forget the words of the great Amen, when he cloſed the ſacred cannon; and be exceeding cautious that you neither diminiſh from nor add to thoſe ſacred truths. You will not therefore neglect, humbly to implore that the holy ſpirit may direct you in your enquiries, lead you into all truth, and impreſs the truth upon your heart. Thus you will find an excellency beyond expreſſion; an excellency which the greateſt abilities without, can never diſcern. And under theſe ſacred influences you will come forth as a burning and a ſhining light; be zealous in your Maſter's cauſe; and ſhew yourſelf "approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." A fidelity to your Lord and Maſter alſo will give life and ſpirit to your preaching; you will endeavour to tranſcribe the truths you feel upon the hearts of others; and will not fail to "declare" the whole "council of God." Such impreſſions likewiſe will guard you from any inclination to diſſemble, to flatter, or in any ſhape to ſacrifice the cauſe of truth, to the humours of men, or for the ſake

of popular applauſe. Such a conduct is beneath the dignity of a goſpel-miniſter.

While you are zealous to preach the goſpel and to do good in the world, you will continue to furniſh your mind with every kind of uſeful knowledge---you will improve much of your time in your ſtudy, treaſuring up ſuch thoughts as are profitable; and in daily devotions, interceding for the people of your charge; and for yourſelf, that you may be found faithful by your judge at laſt; you will likewiſe improve every opportunity to converſe with men upon religion and the concerns of another life, and like your divine maſter, as much as poſſible, you will go "about doing good," both to the bodies and to the ſouls of men. The obligations you now lay yourſelf under, I am ſenſible are exceeding great. And I doubt not you feel yourſelf inſufficient for theſe things. The final inquiſition bears hard upon your mind, and the ſolemn account you muſt at laſt give of your ſtewardſhip to God. Theſe are indeed moſt ſerious reflections, and ought to have a ſuitable impreſſion upon your mind; you are to behave as "one that muſt give an account," and ſhall finally be rewarded "according to his works." But let not ſuch conſiderations diſhearten you in your undertaking. The Lord is able to aſſiſt you, and you have his promiſe that he will do it. "Lo, I am with you always," ſays he, "even unto the end of the world."

Let me now turn my attention particularly to the church of Chriſt in this place.

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My BELOVED BRETHREN,

WITH the most cordial affection I would address you upon this serious and joyful occasion. We heartily congratulate you that the loss you have sustained, in the departure of your late pastor is so soon repaired. And we charitably hope with one, who will "be a good minister of Jesus Christ"---one who is "willing to spend, and be spent for you." He is now to take the charge of your immortal souls; to preach the sacred gospel, and minister to you in holy things. You will therefore receive him as an Ambassador of Christ, and attend to the instructions which he shall give you. But you are not to receive them with an "implicit faith." It is your duty to examine and judge for yourselves, whether the doctrines he shall deliver, be the truth or not. You will therefore hear with candour, and judge with deliberation, and never reject the word without sufficient reason. And when he preaches the truths of the gospel, you will receive them, "not as the word of man, but as they are indeed the word of God." Hearken to all the councils, admonitions, reproofs, and instructions he shall give you; and unprejudiced, let them have their influence upon your hearts.

CONSIDER him also, as a man, subject to like passions with yourselves; never look for perfection in him; and, ever maintain a charitable temper towards him. While he continues to labor among you, esteem him highly in love for his works sake. Relieve him as much as possible from the cares and perplexities of life, that he may give himself wholly to the ministry. And pray for him, that utterance may be given him, that

he may open his mouth boldly, and make known th
miniſtry of the goſpel. Pray likewiſe that the holy ſpi
rit may attend him in his ſtudies and in every part o
his miniſtry, and that he may be a ſucceſsful as well a
faithful miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt. May you and you
paſtor live in peace and unity here, and hereafter b
happy together in heaven.

FINALLY, Let me for a moment invite the ſeriou
attention of this whole aſſembly. You have heard m
friends, in ſome meaſure, the duty of a goſpel-miniſte
and your own has been remotely ſuggeſted. Let
ſenſe of it now have its full weight upon your hearts
and lead you to the practice of it.

9 JU 64

HOWEVER the goſpel is deſpiſed by many, the wor
of the miniſtry is important. The Lord ſtands engag
ed to vindicate his word, and it ſhall not return un
him void. And every good miniſter is unto God "
ſweet ſavour of Chriſt, in them that are ſaved and
them that periſh. To the one a ſavour of death un
death; and to the other a ſavour of life unto life." Hea
ken then to the word which by them, from time to tim
is delivered to you, as thoſe who muſt likewiſe "give
account." Treaſure up the word in your hearts, a
practice it in your lives. Let it profit you, being mix
with faith; and become wiſe to eternal ſalvation.

AND may we all, both miniſters and people, atte
to our reſpective duties, obey the word of our div
Maſter, and at laſt "be found of him in peace;"

AMEN.